

# Jefferson EDGE 2020

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

### Status Report 3: July 2011

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Prepared by JEDCO and GCR & Associates, Inc.

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**JEDCO**  
Jefferson Parish Economic Development Commission



## Economic Development

In response to concerns about quality of life in Jefferson Parish and its impact upon the community's economic competitiveness, JEDCO initiated the Jefferson Edge 2020 Quality of Life initiative. This initiative has produced eight "strategic implementation plans" which include a series of action items to address particular quality of life issues. Implementing the action items requires the total cooperation and keen interest of all involved, including JEDCO, the Jefferson Parish government, numerous other entities, and frequently State and Federal agencies. In 2008, JEDCO retained GCR & Associates, Inc. to prepare semiannual reports outlining the status of each of these action items and overall progress toward implementation.

The following table summarizes the progress made toward each of the economic development (ED) action items.

ED = Economic Development

Action ID #	Action Item	Progress as of July 2011		
		Action Item Complete	Substantial Progress	Little/No Progress
<b>JEDCO Action Items</b>				
ED3	Continue to aggressively market the first 40 acres of the Churchill Technology and Business Park			
ED4	Identify partners and potential funding sources for Phase II development of the remaining 50 acres at the Churchill Technology and Business Park.			
ED9	Work closely with EJGH, Ochsner Health System, and WJGH to facilitate the expansion of medical facilities throughout the Parish.	This action item has been tabled indefinitely.		
ED15	Aggressively market Jefferson Parish as a headquarters for energy companies			
ED16	Continue to aggressively reach out to businesses in Jefferson Parish to support business retention, expansion, and access to capital			
ED17	Ensure that the Louisiana Small Business Development Center maintains a presence at the Churchill Technology and Business Park			
ED18	Seek permanent financing and support for an on-going marketing effort for Jefferson Parish			
ED19	Conduct a review of the Jefferson Parish permitting office to improve performance and to make the permitting process more business friendly.			
<b>GNO Inc. Action Items</b>				
ED5	Build upon existing efforts of GNO Inc. and commission a comprehensive study and action plan for the workforce development infrastructure in the New Orleans region			
ED10	Oppose changes in the federal tax code that would discourage off-shore oil and gas exploration			
ED11	Work to preserve funding in the federal defense budget for weapons systems that are produced in Jefferson Parish and in the New Orleans region			
ED13	Identify major national growth industries and the potential for locally based companies to capitalize on emerging economic opportunities			
ED14	Partner with the Port of New Orleans, GNO Inc., and the Baton Rouge Chamber of Commerce (BRAC) to expand opportunities for international shipping and trade			
<b>Regional Planning Commission (RPC) Action Items</b>				
ED6	Support the development of a high speed rail line from New Orleans to Baton Rouge, with a stop in Jefferson Parish			
ED7	Support the implementation of transportation projects of regional significance, such as a light rail line to the Airport; improvement to the Earhart Expressway, and the construction of I-49			
ED8	Collaborate with major railroads and the Regional Planning Commission to implement the New Orleans Rail Corridor Gateway Study			
<b>Jefferson Parish Planning Dept. Action Items</b>				
ED1	Modify land use regulations and invest in infrastructure to develop an "Elmwood West" commercial and industrial node			
<b>Jefferson Parish Film Dept. Action Items</b>				
ED12	Collaborate with Jefferson's state legislative delegation to renew the state motion picture, digital media, music production, live theater, and motion picture infrastructure tax credits.			
<b>City of Kenner Action Items</b>				
ED2	Collaborate with the Airport to create a master plan for the redevelopment of "buyout" properties			

# Economic Development

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<b>JEDCO Action Items</b>									
ED3	Continue to aggressively market the first 40 acres of the Churchill Technology and Business Park	On-going	<p>JEDCO has continued to nationally market the Business Park through an aggressive advertising, public relations, and social media campaign. These efforts have generated dozens of leads and one strong prospect, though no agreements have been made. JEDCO's efforts have transitioned from a general awareness campaign to a focus on generating specific leads. Public relations efforts have emphasized recently that the Park is ready to receive tenants.</p> <p>In the coming months, JEDCO will work with GNO, Inc., LED and the Marketing Alliance to develop a specific list of targets for relocation.</p> <p>Finally, JEDCO has succeeded in securing sources of free fill to elevate parcels and make them "development ready." The source of the fill is numerous drainage projects in Jefferson, and the Corps of Engineers has agreed to deposit the fill at Churchill Farms free of charge. This is a major step in making the Park more marketable, and it will substantially reduce the time between the identification of a site and construction of new buildings and facilities. Filling of the first phase of the Park will be completed by the spring of 2012.</p>	Monitor the deposit of fill on development parcels. Continue aggressive outreach efforts. Work to translate leads into a site commitment. Establish benchmarks for performance and success.					
ED4	Identify partners and potential funding sources for Phase II development of the remaining 50 acres at the Churchill Technology and Business Park.	Identify funding and timetable by 2011	<p>With the identification of fill as described in ED3 (above), JEDCO is taking a major step toward making the first phase of the Park development ready. After fill is fully deposited within the first phase in the spring of 2012, fill will be deposited in the second phase of the Park.</p> <p>While a funding source has not been identified for the required infrastructure work for the second phase, the identification and depositing of fill represents a major step in ultimately developing and attracting tenants to the second phase.</p>	Monitor the deposit of fill on development parcels. Continue to focus on attracting tenants to the first phase of the Park (a likely precondition for attracting financing for the second phase). As the Park begins to lease up, meet with elected official to outline a financing strategy for Phase II.					

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<b>JEDCO Action Items</b>								
ED9	Work closely with EJGH, Ochsner Health System, and WJGH to facilitate the expansion of medical facilities throughout the Parish.	On-going	<p>In the summer of 2009, Louisiana Economic Development (LED) formally submitted a multi-million dollar incentive package to Ochsner Health System to facilitate their expansion plans on the lake side of Jefferson Highway. However, concerns about the feasibility of the employment targets outlined within the proposed cooperative endeavor agreement (CEA) between the State and Ochsner have prevented the agreement from being signed.</p> <p>In spite of the fact that no CEA was signed between LED and Ochsner, expansion plans are underway as part of a cooperative endeavor agreement between Ochsner and the University of Queensland Medical School in Australia.</p>	<p>Due to overall challenges in providing public assistance to finance major expansion plans, this project has been tabled indefinitely. However, JEDCO should maintain a dialogue with Ochsner and the service district hospitals to determine if they have other imminent capital needs and whether state assistance could expedite those plans.</p>	This action item has been tabled indefinitely.			
ED15	Aggressively market Jefferson Parish as a headquarters for energy companies	Complete internal marketing strategy in 2009, 2010; initiate targeted outreach efforts to energy companies in 2010, 2011	<p>While there has not been any further progress in securing "green energy" tenants in Churchill Park, the first tenant at JEDCO's Business Innovation Center is a solar panel design/installation firm.</p> <p>JEDCO has also met with the Marine Well Containment Company, the joint venture of the major oil companies, to discuss basing their worldwide operations at the Avondale shipyards site.</p> <p>JEDCO continues to maintain a database of energy companies but has not traveled to other green/energy conferences.</p> <p>As part of JEDCO's retention program, staff have reached out to companies affected by the spill and moratorium.</p> <p>Another potential area of focus in the energy field is new high paying jobs through the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement (BOEMRE). In the aftermath of the BP Horizon spill, there will be a multitude of new government inspection and regulatory positions in the New Orleans region.</p> <p>A final opportunity in the energy field arises when large companies outside of the region decide to acquire smaller companies within the region. While JEDCO cannot interfere with these transactions, JEDCO can develop a plan of attack for meeting with the acquiring company as quickly as possible to convey to them the benefits of Jefferson and the New Orleans region.</p>	<p>Continue discussions with oil and gas companies and attempt to secure a first energy industry tenant at the Churchill Technology and Business Park.</p> <p>Reach out to BOEMRE about potentially setting up an office or offices in Jefferson Parish.</p> <p>Develop a rapid response plan to communicate with companies from outside of the New Orleans region that decide to acquire smaller, Jefferson-based energy firms.</p>				

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ED16	Continue to aggressively reach out to businesses in Jefferson Parish to support business retention, expansion, and access to capital	On-going	<p>One of JEDCO's most significant retention efforts in recent months was the insurer PeoplesHealth. Jefferson was able to retain the company's sizable operation in the face of an aggressive relocation offer.</p> <p>Mr. Mudbugs catering/King Creole foods is in the process of undergoing a major expansion of their Kenner operations. This expansion grew out of JEDCO's retention efforts and has been facilitated by tax incentives and JEDCO-sponsored financing.</p> <p>JEDCO also continues to reach out to major retailers that are considering establishing a presence in the New Orleans market.</p> <p>JEDCO has also reached out to the federal BOEMRE to facilitate their employment growth in the area as a result of the emphasis on increased inspections of off-shore drilling following the Deepwater Horizon spill.</p> <p>JEDCO's greatest retention project is Huntington Ingalls Industries (formerly Northrop Grumman). JEDCO is working with LED and GNO, Inc. to retain the company while also identifying alternate uses should the closure of Avondale come to fruition.</p> <p>Another potential growth area that JEDCO should examine in the coming months is "back office" operations such as call centers.</p> <p>A company that JEDCO could potentially engage is Nucor, who will be building a major iron plant in nearby St. James Parish. Nucor could potentially be persuaded to locate a regional office in Jefferson Parish.</p> <p>One challenge, in terms of the resources available for economic development, is uncertainty regarding the Parish's Economic Development Fund. The legal language regarding the use of these funds is somewhat ambiguous. As a result, there is little predictability and advance planning for the use of this funding source.</p>	<p>Continue to pursue aggressive business retention, expansion, and recruitment efforts. Engage Nucor to determine whether they would have an interest in establishing a regional office in Jefferson Parish in light of their forthcoming investment in St. James Parish.</p> <p>With regard to back office operations, determine whether JEDCO should develop a specific marketing strategy for identifying and pursuing call centers and other back office opportunities.</p> <p>Regarding the Parish economic development fund, reach out to Parish officials to initiate a dialogue about providing more clarity in the use of the fund when it comes up for renewal in 2014. Perhaps develop interim programmatic guidelines between now and 2014.</p>			

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ED17	Ensure that the Louisiana Small Business Development Center maintains a presence at the Churchill Technology and Business Park	Initiate outreach in 2009; secure a partnership in 2010	JEDCO has not entered into a formal CEA with the SBDC, but JEDCO is continuing to provide space to the organization through an informal agreement. In June of 2011, they began occupying office space at the Churchill Park, and their first events and seminars have been conducted.	Coordinate with the Small Business Development Center to finalize a formal CEA.					
ED18	Seek permanent financing and support for an on-going marketing effort for Jefferson Parish	Conduct outreach and secure multi-year funding commitments in 2009, 2010	<p>A key component of Jefferson's on-going marketing effort is the publication of Jefferson Life magazine. Jefferson Life is currently covering most of its production cost through advertising revenues alone. The magazine is also increasing publication frequency from quarterly to six times per year, which will in turn increase its appeal to advertisers. This increased frequency adds approximately \$110,000 of value per issue to the quality of life campaign.</p> <p>This marketing effort was also to be supplemented with \$400,000 in funding for 2010 from The Jefferson EDGE investors, the Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office, and Jefferson Parish Public Schools. However, due to budget constraints, that funding was reduced to \$200,000. This cut in funding has been offset to a degree by the success of Jefferson Life magazine.</p>	Continue to monitor the success of Jefferson Life in covering its expenses and reaching Parish residents. Advocate for the full \$400,000 in annual funding from EDGE investors, JPSO, and the school system. Continue to explore grant and other external revenue sources to support marketing initiatives.					
ED19	Conduct a review of the Jefferson Parish permitting office to improve performance and to make the permitting process more business friendly.	Initiate review in 2011. Finalize recommendations and begin to implement recommendations in 2012.	At the direction of JEDCO's economic development strike force, ED19 is a new action item that is being added to the Economic Development plan. The permitting process in Jefferson can be slow and cumbersome at times, thereby impeding development activity. Furthermore, for many businesses and individuals, the permitting process represents their first introduction to Jefferson Parish. As the Parish's "front door," the permitting process should embrace national best practices and should shift to a paradigm whereby facilitating, rather than impeding, development is the end goal.	Initiate dialogue with Parish government about funding and conducting an internal review of the permitting process and a review of national best practices.					

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<b>GNO Inc. Action Items</b>								
ED5	Build upon existing efforts of GNO Inc. and commission a comprehensive study and action plan for the workforce development infrastructure in the New Orleans region	Initiate this phase of workforce development study before year end, 2010	<p>GNO, Inc. continues to advocate for and implement a variety of workforce development initiatives. Foremost among them is the Legislature's recent passage of GRAD Act 2.0 (HB 549 by Representative Tucker). This legislation will give institutions of higher education the ability to improve performance through increased resources, autonomy and flexibility. The GRAD Act program is administered by the Board of Regents, with all post-secondary colleges and systems participating in the endeavor, which has gained national attention. GNO, Inc. worked through a statewide coalition called BILD (Businesses for Improving Louisiana's Development) to advocate for passage of this legislation.</p> <p>GNO, Inc. also concluded a green workforce initiative focused on the Northshore, which resulted from a collaboration of the Northshore Community Foundation, Northshore Technical College, and Southeastern Louisiana University.</p> <p>On the topic of employer-assisted housing (EAH), GNO, Inc. recently concluded a feasibility study which concluded that neighborhood marketing tools are needed to retain and attract employees. GNO, Inc. is adopting a website—www.makeneworleanshome.com—which could meet this need.</p> <p>Finally, GNO, Inc. has officially adopted www.WorkNOLA.com as a repository for local jobs. Increasing job postings and marketing the site to employers is a top workforce priority of GNO, Inc.</p>	<p>Monitor the implementation of LA GRAD Act 2.0 and determine whether the Northshore workforce initiative would be applicable to Jefferson Parish.</p> <p>Monitor the effectiveness of neighborhood marketing efforts and the WorkNOLA website.</p> <p>Evaluate these initiatives in the context of the goals established in GNO Inc.'s July, 2009 workforce development study. Determine whether supplemental workforce development efforts are necessary.</p>				

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ED10	Oppose changes in the federal tax code that would discourage off-shore oil and gas exploration	Initiate outreach in 2009; continually monitor federal tax policy to preserve existing tax breaks for oil and gas exploration	<p>GNO Inc. continues to focus its efforts, with respect to offshore drilling, on the “de facto” moratorium on shallow water drilling and deepwater exploration due to rigid permitting procedures. GNO, Inc. has worked in collaboration with local business councils and the Gulf Economic Survival Team (GEST). In recent months, pro-industry legislation has been introduced in Congress and is being backed by GNO, Inc. and the Louisiana delegation. These new “offensive” measures include HR1229, the “Putting the Gulf Back to Work Act” by Rep. Hastings and the “Domestic Jobs, Domestic Energy, and Deficit Reduction Act” by Senator Vitter, both bipartisan efforts.</p> <p>GNO, Inc. is also working with the state government and Mineral Board to reduce royalty rates for offshore activity. The 2010 oil spill delayed these efforts, but in May of 2011, the La Dept. of Natural Resources released a draft proposal for a new royalty policy. This draft is now going through technical revisions and public comment, and it is anticipated that the State Mineral Board will approve the new policy by September, which will then trigger new rulemaking. These changes have the potential to reduce royalty rates along Louisiana’s Coastal Zone, thereby spurring new deep gas activity and related jobs.</p>	Monitor the progress of pending Congressional measures to increase drilling activity. Monitor progress of efforts to reduce royalty rates. Continue to follow proposals to change the federal tax code that would result in reduced drilling activity					



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ED13	Identify major national growth industries and the potential for locally based companies to capitalize on emerging economic opportunities	Analyze LED study and coordinate with GNO Inc. in 2010; initiate analysis of and outreach to relevant local and national businesses in 2010, 2011	<p>Since the completion of Louisiana Economic Development's (LED's) study of potential "blue ocean" industries in Louisiana, JEDCO has used the study to identify local companies that have the infrastructure, capacity, and ability to capitalize on identified "blue ocean" fields. JEDCO's business retention and expansion team has incorporated the companies into JEDCO's annual list of targeted companies to meet.</p> <p>Additionally, GNO, Inc. continues to implement the blue ocean study. GNO, Inc. commissioned Deloitte consulting to identify specific sustainable industry subsectors that had the potential for growth within greater New Orleans. GNO, Inc. subsequently launched the Sustainable Industries Initiative (SII) to position the region for growth within these subsectors.</p>	<p>Periodically update the annual list of companies that JEDCO will meet with depending on companies' ability to expand into "blue ocean" industries. Consider broadening the geographic footprint (i.e. state-wide, regional) of companies to engage.</p> <p>Further refine the list of industries that JEDCO will target for recruitment and develop industry-specific strategies and marketing materials. Coordinate with GNO, Inc.'s SII program to develop a list of targeted industries for Jefferson.</p>			
ED14	Partner with the Port of New Orleans, GNO Inc., and the Baton Rouge Chamber of Commerce (BRAC) to expand opportunities for international shipping and trade	Analyze international trade study upon completion in 2009; coordinate with and offer technical assistance to GNO, Inc. and other agencies in the implementation of the study's recommendations	<p>One of the major recommendations of the International Trade Study, adopted by GNO Inc. and BRAC, was to pursue a capital expansion plan at the Napoleon Avenue container terminal. That project is still in the process of seeking public and private funding, though the private funding portion will be aided by the passage of HB 125 in 2009. This legislation provides state tax credits for investment in Louisiana ports and a tax credit for cargo imported or exported through Louisiana ports.</p> <p>The LED rules for the new infrastructure investment credit were promulgated in the fall of 2010, and the tax credit is now available for use. Furthermore, SB159 by Senator Appel, passed in the 2011 legislative session, extends the tax credit program through 2017.</p> <p>Finally, GNO, Inc. and BRAC will be leading a marketing trip to Brazil in October of 2011 to attract trade to the ports of southeast Louisiana. This trip will be conducted in collaboration with partners from around the state and the U.S. Commerce Department.</p>	<p>Monitor the effectiveness of the infrastructure tax credit program in securing capital investments in port facilities.</p> <p>Determine whether additional legislative, administrative, marketing, and/or capital initiatives are necessary to increase international trade opportunities.</p>			

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<b>Regional Planning Commission (RPC) Action Items</b>							
ED6	Support the development of a high speed rail line from New Orleans to Baton Rouge, with a stop in Jefferson Parish	Secure funding for study in 2010, 2011; Initiate study in 2011, 2012; initiate capital program in 2014	<p>The Baton Rouge-New Orleans super region was unsuccessful in obtaining a federal sustainable communities planning grant, but the preparation of the grant has created a foundation for further collaboration. The grant application was well received by the federal government, and a second round of sustainable communities funding will soon be made available.</p> <p>The CONNECT coalition is constantly looking for other sources of foundation and government resources for feasibility work regarding high speed rail. In the meantime, they are conducting a policy research and education campaign in coordination with the non-profit ReConnecting America and the Surdna and Greater New Orleans Foundation. CONNECT consists of public and private entities from the Baton Rouge-New Orleans corridor, and it advocates for enhanced transportation options between the metro areas. CONNECT has been meeting on a regular basis.</p> <p>Additionally, the Southeast Super Regional Commission is still meeting to explore regional synergies between New Orleans and Baton Rouge.</p> <p>From the perspective of Jefferson Parish, however, the critical issue is where the stops for the high speed rail line would be situated. If they would be located in exurban, undeveloped areas, such as Gonzales or Prairieville, this investment would have the potential of robbing Jefferson of further businesses and residents. If, on the other hand, stops were only to be located in areas that are already developed (e.g. New Orleans, Jefferson, downtown Baton Rouge), the effect on Jefferson could be positive.</p>	Monitor and participate in the CONNECT Coalition initiative to ensure that a rail line would not be designed in such a way as to sap residents and businesses from Jefferson Parish. Oppose the proposed high speed rail line if in fact it includes numerous stops in undeveloped, "exurban" areas between New Orleans and Baton Rouge.			

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ED7	Support the implementation of transportation projects of regional significance, such as a light rail line to the Airport; improvement to the Earhart Expressway, and the construction of I-49	Timelines vary by transportation project; aim to have studies underway for all key transportation projects by 2011	<p>The prospects of both a light rail line to the Airport and the extension of I-49 remain uncertain at this time. Due to both projects' cost and uncertainty about the future operator of a light rail line, there has not been significant momentum on either project. Some incremental improvements in the I-49 South corridor are being reviewed and advanced by La DOTD, but no segments that would impact Jefferson Parish.</p> <p>For the Earhart Expressway flyover project, a Record of Decision (ROD) has been completed to demonstrate compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). However, insufficient funding exists to move the project into the advanced design stage; and as a result of delays, the ROD has likely expired.</p> <p>Along the Earhart corridor, the principal focus recently has been on a new interchange at Causeway and Earhart, though no funding for construction has been identified yet.</p> <p>There has been little progress on this action item since the completion of the previous status report in the fall of 2010.</p>	Generate regional political momentum for I-49 extension and the light rail project to the airport. Secure additional funding for the Earhart Expressway flyover and for the Earhart-Causeway interchange.					
ED8	Collaborate with major railroads and the Regional Planning Commission to implement the New Orleans Rail Corridor Gateway Study	Secure funding for environmental assessment in 2010; initiate assessment in 2010, 2011; initiate capital improvements in 2013, 2014	A consultant has been selected to complete an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), and after extensive negotiations between the DOTD and the consultant team, a scope and a price have been decided on. The railroads are actively participating in the process and have contributed ½ of the project cost. The project should commence in the summer of 2011.	Monitor and participate in Environmental Impact Statement study. Work to identify potential sources for capital funds.					

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<b>Jefferson Parish Planning Dept. Action Items</b>								
ED1	Modify land use regulations and invest in infrastructure to develop an "Elmwood West" commercial and industrial node	Issue RFP or initiate study in 2010; initiate regulatory changes/improvements in 2011, 2012	A preliminary \$30,000 study was completed by the University of Washington's College of Built Environments to recommend conceptual improvements and a conceptual vision for the undeveloped West Bank of Jefferson. No further funding has been secured to conduct a more detailed "implementation plan" that would recommend specific capital improvements and regulatory changes. However, JEDCO has recently been involved in discussions with Parish officials about developing a strategic plan not only for Elmwood West but for the entirety of the West Bank from the Harvey Canal to the St. Charles Parish line. Urban planning consultants have been contacted about conducting a preliminary, investigative phase to determine the components of such a plan and how expansive it should be.	Continue discussions with Parish officials about securing funding and initiating a strategic plan for the West Bank from the Harvey Canal to the St. Charles Parish line. This study should provide concrete recommendations of the regulatory changes and capital improvements that are needed to implement "Elmwood West" and other quality development within the undeveloped portions of the West Bank.				
<b>Jefferson Parish Film Dept. Action Items</b>								
ED12	Collaborate with Jefferson's state legislative delegation to renew the state motion picture, digital media, music production, live theater, and motion picture infrastructure tax credits.	Pass legislation in 2009, 2010 at the latest	Action complete. For more information, refer to October, 2009 status update.	No further action required.				

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<b>City of Kenner Action Items</b>							
ED2	Collaborate with the Airport to create a master plan for the redevelopment of "buyout" properties	Complete and issue RFP in 2009. Complete redevelopment plan in 2010	<p>After a temporary slowdown in the process of redeveloping the buyout properties, the process is back on track. Meetings between the Airport, the City of Kenner, and JEDCO are now being held more frequently in order to discuss two outstanding issues: the zoning of the buyout properties and whether properties should be auctioned off piece by piece or in a bundle. The zoning reclassification of the properties should be resolved by Council action within 3 – 6 months, while stakeholders are awaiting an opinion from the UNO Institute of Economic Development and Real Estate Research as to whether the properties should be bundled.</p> <p>In the meantime, the City of Kenner is also examining whether public rights of way can be rescinded to create more attractive parcels for redevelopment.</p> <p>It has been determined that no cooperative endeavor agreement will be required to dispose of the properties, and the primary emphasis for all parties is to redevelop them as expeditiously as possible.</p>	Monitor progress in completing the rezoning of the properties and assist in expediting the disposition of the properties, either individually or as a bundle.			



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